

# Town Awarded \$400,000 NYS DEC Grant to Expand and Upgrade the Shellfish Hatchery in Mount Sinai Harbor

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**Farmingville, NY** – On June 20, Supervisor Ed Romaine announced that the Town of Brookhaven has been awarded a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation grant to expand and upgrade the Town's Mariculture Facility at Cedar Beach in Mount Sinai. Grants were also awarded to East Hampton, Islip and Hempstead as part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's New York Shellfish initiative. Funded projects range from new or expanded water intake systems, algal culture systems, larval culture systems, broodstock conditioning, spawning and holding systems, setting tanks and systems, nursery (juvenile seed) culture equipment and systems, and field grow-out systems for juvenile (seed) shellfish that are expected to yield approximately 12 million hard clam seed

and 3 million oysters (spat-on-shell) by 2019.

"Shellfish are vital to the health of our waterways," said Supervisor Romaine. "I thank Governor Cuomo and the New York State DEC for recognizing the Town of Brookhaven for everything we do to preserve and protect the environment. This grant will go a long way in helping the Town continue our very important work to increase the shellfish population and clean up our harbors and bays."

Councilwoman Bonner said, "The scope of work at our Mariculture Facility has expanded over the years and we need to upgrade the system. This grant is an affirmation of the good work that we are doing and I thank Governor Cuomo and the DEC for providing the funding that we need to carry on."

The Town of Brookhaven's Mariculture Facility grows approximately 1.5 million oysters and over a million clams each year. Juvenile clams and oysters are purchased from local nurseries and grown in a land based upweller system, in which seawater is pumped passed the shellfish held in tanks. The shellfish feed on the algae in the water column. This system protects the shellfish from predators and allows them to grow faster than they would normally grow in the wild.

The oyster spat are kept over the winter in cages to continue their growth through a second season. Oysters are released at a size of approximately 1.5 inches into the local waterways. Clams are normally held for only one season, but the facility will overwinter about 200,000 seed for planting in protected plots. The purpose of the program is to enhance natural recruitment and improve the harvest of shellfish for residents and commercial baymen. A portion of the shellfish are reserved for the Town's not-for-profit partners, who also raise the oysters in cages and bags and place the oyster spat on protected plots to aid in water quality improvement and act as a natural spawner sanctuaries.

Pictured are Supervisor Ed Romaine (right) and Councilwoman Jane Bonner (center) with North Babylon High School Biology Teacher John Jaeger (left) and students from Western Suffolk BOCES who participated in the Shellfish Mariculture Program at Cedar Beach. The program, which is sponsored by the Town of Brookhaven, is aimed at educating students about aquaculture techniques and how to raise seed clams for planting at public restoration sites.

**Division of Public Information \* Office of the Supervisor**

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